

FY 2010 Clinical Educator Grants Program



South Central (VISN 16) MIRECC Clinical Educator Grants Program

I. Background

Funded in October 1998, the South Central (VISN 16) Mental Illness Research, Education, and Clinical Center (MIRECC) is one of ten MIRECCs in the Department of Veterans Affairs. Congress mandated the establishment of MIRECCs to improve the provision of healthcare services to veterans living with mental illness through research and education and through the development of improved models and systems for delivering mental healthcare in VHA. The mission of the South Central MIRECC is to “improve access to evidence-based practices for rural and other under-served populations, especially returning war veterans, veterans experiencing natural disasters, and vulnerable elderly veterans.”

II. Purpose

The South Central MIRECC formed the Clinical Educator Grants Program in 1999 to support and encourage clinicians to develop innovative educational interventions, enhance current educational materials or programs that target under-served or hard-to-reach populations and/or their families, or improve the system of mental health care delivery, especially in rural settings. The Clinical Educator Grants Program supports the mission of the MIRECC and the VA’s Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook by funding projects that:

- promote evidence-based psychotherapies;
- implement and evaluate recovery oriented services;
- improve treatment adherence and medication compliance;
- improve access and quality of mental health care in rural settings;
- enhance patient input in treatment and involvement with the family;
- provide greater knowledge and understanding of mental illness and treatment to patients, their families, providers, and trainees; and
- coordinate with community resources.

* The MIRECC accepts proposals consistent with the VA’s Uniform Mental Health Services Handbook but **gives funding priority to proposals that address clinical educational needs in rural settings, such as community-based outpatient clinics (CBOCs).**

Educator awards are typically employed in one of three ways, although you are not limited to these approaches:

1. *Apply an existing educational program in a new way or compile and structure a new educational program from existing, published materials* (e.g., organize published materials on anger management into modules for a group format or brief cognitive behavioral therapy);
2. *Develop a new educational intervention and pilot it* (e.g., create and assess a new patient education intervention, like SAFE or the Courage Group manual, or improve the delivery of clinical information to improve treatment adherence, like the Helping Dementia Caregivers CD or Psychotherapy Group DVD); or
3. *Update an existing educational product.* Previous grant recipients are invited to apply for a follow up education grant to: a) update their previously developed products, or b) repackage existing products and compare them to the original (e.g., develop an educational DVD and compare its effectiveness to a workbook).

III. Eligibility

A single individual is the “Principal Applicant,” although the project may be a group effort. Collaboration across VA sites, such as across two VAs or between a VA and CBOC, is given a priority for funding.















Awards are made to VA personnel in VISN 16 who are affiliated with or collaborating with Mental Health staff. Funds will be transferred to a Mental Health Fund Control Point (FCP) at a VA medical center. Personnel may include student trainees; however, **a permanent VA staff member must be listed as a co-applicant.** Consumers or non-VA community members can be co-applicants but cannot be the Principal Applicant. Awarded applicants are “Affiliate MIRECC Educator(s)” during the course of their project.

IV. Award

An award is between \$500 and \$7,000, depending on the scope of the project, number of sites, and budget appropriateness. Larger awards are possible with strong justification.

V. Use of Grant Funds

Congress and VHA have strict regulations on how education grant funds can be used. The table below provides general guidelines about what can and cannot be purchased with these funds.

You CAN purchase these items	You CANNOT purchase these items
 Travel of a non-VA employee to a VA site (e.g., a guest speaker)	 Travel by VA employees
 VA hiring of a new and temporary employee (please note that approval from your HR department is required; this can be a cumbersome and slow process and success varies by site).	 Salary or honorariums to VA employees (even for work on personal time)
 Incentives for participation (e.g., Canteen coupons, door prizes, etc.)	 Food (including participant snacks)
 Commercial materials to be used in the project	 Lodging
 Professional services (e.g., voice recording; computer programming; web page design) that cannot be provided by your VA facility. Please check with your facility to ensure that this service is not available.	 Photocopying or binding that can be provided by your VA facility
 Material reproduction that cannot be provided by your VA facility. Please check with your facility to ensure that this service is not available.	 Equipment or IT (computers, projectors, CD players, and some software)
 Additional materials and/or supplies that are not available at your facility and are a part of your project (e.g., anatomical models and condoms to demonstrate safer sex practices)	 Reproduction of electronic data (e.g., audiotapes, videotapes, CDs) that can be provided by your VA facility

VI. Budget Justification

Prepare an itemized budget using the budget table template provided in Attachment A. The award can purchase materials, supplies, and services. Include a justification for each item, explaining why you need it. If a similar item or service is commonly available through Care/Service Lines, please state why the purchase is being requested.

VII. Planning a Project and Spending the Funds

Talk to someone in the MIRECC about your idea before writing anything. (See names below). Get advice about whether your idea is innovative, doable, and fundable. The MIRECC may be able to help connect you with a partner or co-applicant who has expertise in areas that you need on your team. Getting advice does not guarantee funding, but it can significantly improve your chances of being funded. Good advice will save you time and effort and result in a stronger application.

In planning your project and the budget, keep in mind some important fiscal limitations. Awards are usually announced by December. Funds are usually transferred by January. **Clinical Educator Grant funds MUST be spent or obligated for spending (in the Fiscal system) before the end of the current fiscal year (September 30), or risk being swept by the facility and returned to VA Central Office.** The MIRECC cannot guarantee that unused funds will be available in the next fiscal year. Therefore, plan your project so that you spend your funds between January and mid-September. You are not required to complete your project by mid-September. We will remind you of upcoming fiscal deadlines.

Often proposals are too big to be completed in one funding cycle (January to mid-September). Large projects may need to be broken into two phases (e.g., developing program materials in Year 1, and applying and evaluating the materials in Year 2). If you do this, please propose "Part one" in the current application, and then briefly describe the future phase(s) of the project (stating that you intend to apply for funding for that part of the project). We cannot fund future phases in advance but it will help your current application if reviewers know your next steps.

VIII. Use and Distribution of MIRECC Clinical Educator Grant Products

All products developed with support from a MIRECC Clinical Educator Grant (e.g., training program manuals, family education modules, videotapes, CDs, DVDs, etc.) belong to the South Central MIRECC and VHA. All products must acknowledge funding from the MIRECC. These products are not for profit and will be distributed to VA facilities at "cost" or at no cost. Products may be posted on the MIRECC web site and shared with other Networks.

IX. How to Apply

A. What do I send, when is it due, and where do I send it??

An application outline is attached. Applications for the fiscal year 2010 funding cycle should be submitted by email to randy.burke@va.gov and must be received by **4:00 PM (CT), July 17, 2009**. ***Most applicants are asked to make changes: e.g., provide additional information, modify their plan or intervention, or submit a revision.*** Funding decisions will be made no later than late October 2009.

When submitting your application, please be sure to include:

- title of the project;
- name(s) of the principal applicant and co-applicants;
- your postal address;
- name of your facility;
- contact phone number; and
- **Cc: the VAMC Mental Health Care/Service Line Director for concurrence. You may also need concurrence from your Clinic Director, if at a CBOC. *If the Care/Service Line Director is not included on the email, we cannot accept your proposal.***

IMPORTANT NOTE - Please talk to your Director(s) about your project and give your Director(s) time to read your proposal BEFORE submitting it. Some proposals have not been accepted because the Care/ Service Line Director did not know about them or did not support them.

B. How long is the application and what should it look like?

The application should describe your project in **1500 words or less** using a **12-point font** and **1-inch margins**. The budget (with justification text) is additional and should describe any supportive services that you plan to use (e.g., the name of graphic design services that you will use). A suggested outline for writing your application is on the next page.

C. What is the process?

All applications are reviewed by the MIRECC Education Core and outside experts, when necessary. Applications are rated in terms of consistency with the MIRECC mission, appropriate goals, target population, attention to population needs, feasibility of plans, appropriate evaluation, potential outcomes, justified budget, etc. All applicants will receive written feedback about their proposal. The review committee often asks applicants to make specific changes in their project or provide additional information in a revised application. Revised applications are reviewed for adherence to the review committee's recommendations. Funding decisions are made by late October.

X. Questions

If you have questions about the application or the appropriateness of your project, please contact Dr. Randy Burke at randy.burke@va.gov or 601-362-4471 ext. 1152.

Outline for Applications

I. INTRODUCTION / JUSTIFICATION

- A. Provide a brief statement of the clinical issue or problem that will be addressed by your project
- B. What, if any, materials currently exist to address this need? [*Search the Internet!*]
- C. How does your project meet the MIRECC goal of improving access to evidence-based practices to rural and underserved Veterans?

II. DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

- A. Who is the target audience (Veterans, families, VA staff)?
- B. How many Veterans / people will take part in the project? Give a number.
- C. What do you plan to do in your project? What are the start and finish dates?
- D. How will you evaluate your project? How will you make sure your project is carried out as planned? How do you plan to measure your outcomes? How will you know if your project was a success?

III. FUTURE PLANS

- A. What might be the long-term impact of your project?

IV. BUDGET SHEET (outside the 1500 word limit)

- A. Individually list all materials/services you will need to purchase, including costs.
- B. Provide brief text justifying each purchase
- C. Sum all costs to give a total cost for the project.

Tips for Success:

1. Be complete but brief. Reviewers won't know what you want to do unless you tell them clearly. Have colleagues read drafts of your proposal and solicit feedback. Proposals that are vague, general, or duplicate what has already been done receive poor reviews and low scores.
2. Review previously funded projects and search the Internet, library, and educational catalogs for products similar to what you propose. Use your search to justify the uniqueness of your proposal.
3. Itemize your budget and explain why you need those items. Do not bundle items together. Be aware of ways that you cannot spend these funds (see table above). If you have a question, ask!
4. Make your project doable. Plan a project that you can complete (or nearly so) between about January and mid-September. Bigger projects may need to be broken into smaller pieces and separate grants.

5. Ask for feedback about the evaluation. Many applicants have difficulty deciding how to measure/evaluate the outcomes and objectives of their project. Dr. Randy Burke and others are available to answer questions and provide advice on simple ways to evaluate your project. Contact Dr. Burke at Randy.burke@va.gov
6. Get advice from MIRECC staff or from clinicians who have had funded projects! Call/email now! We want you to be successful. Below is also a short list of people who have developed MIRECC-funded education products and who are willing to provide informal consultation. Contact information can be found in the Outlook Global Address List.

Jackson – Dr. Randy Burke, Dr. Jefferson Parker

Houston – Dr. Jeff Cully, Dr. Quang (Charlie) Nguyen, Dr. Cayla Teal

Oklahoma City – Dr. Michelle Sherman, Dr. Tom Teasdale, Dr. Ursula Bowling

Attachment A: Budget Table

[illegible]